SOCIOLOGY OF CREATIVE BEHAVIOR
A Multi-Paradigmatic Confusion *

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This paper seeks to clarify paradigmatic confusions extant in the sociologies of creative behavior. Scientific paradigms are recognized as the framework constituting the way a scientist sees and interprets the phenomena of his interest. When a scientist "explains" a particular phenomenon from two or more paradigms at the same time, it promotes confusion by allowing for different interpretations. A paradigm in the sociology of art is put forth illustrating the extent of paradigmatic confusion in sociology. Examples of this confusion are identified and their implications discussed. It is suggested that studies adhering to one paradigm at a time will strengthen our explanations, or indicate the limitations of our paradigms, thus facilitating scientific advancement.

Thomas S. Kuhn (1962) has advanced a convincing thesis that scientific theories "rise and fall" on the basis of a presupposed paradigm. Paradigms provide the scholar with a consistent means of interpreting the phenomena within a defined domain, that is, a perspective. The various aspects which together make up one's perspective include all of the concepts relating to the domain, the relations between these concepts, the assumptions underlying the relations, as well as the rules, methods, and theories guiding the acquisition of knowledge about the phenomena under investigation (cf. McCain and Segal, 1969). However, one's perspective is not simply a summation of the various aspects constituting its definition. It is, rather, inextricably bound with the ways in which these various aspects have been used historically. Thus, the perspective is not a rigid inflexible set of blinders, quite the contrary, it represents a way of looking at the world, legitimated by past and present social support, which enables an observer to make sense out of a given phenomenon within a given arena of focus.

The sociologies of creative behavior, a genetic term including art, literature, science, religion, etc., have been characterized by competing paradigms since their inception in the writings of Karl Marx. The point here is not to suggest that all sociologists of creative behavior adopt a uniform perspective in explaining aspects of mental productions, indeed the development of science requires different perspectives. What is objected to, however, is the nondiscriminatory employment of different paradigms, by the same author, in the explanation of a single behavior set. When a sequence or pattern of social acts have been collected from competing paradigms, and are interwoven into a single explanation of some phenomena it tends to promote confusion in assessing meaning. James H. Barnett (1959:401) alludes to this difficulty with his statement that, "Research in the sociology of art has been sporadic and unsystematic, (and). . .

because their work has often imitated that of art historians, sociologists have generally failed to make the important contributions to this field for which they are uniquely equipped by training and perspective."

Pitirim Sorokin's (1957) impressive work in the area of creative behavior provides a case in point. Sorokin (1957:20-118) has interwoven the perspectives of a historian, a sociologist, and a metaphysician in an attempt to explain "fluctuations of forms of art." In his 2500 year compilation of art history, Sorokin finds it convenient to ignore existential factors for an explanation of changing art "forms." Replying in part, to the evolutionary and cyclical theorists, Sorokin (1957:64) conceives of an "immanent causation, or self regulation of sociocultural processes." For all of his statistics, Sorokin (1957:676) remains convinced that art autonomously fluctuates between the "ideational," the "idealistic," and the "sensate." It is a thesis that is antithetical to the sociological paradigm. Nevertheless, by scrutinizing Sorokin's work from an explicitly sociological perspective, some testable hypotheses may be salvaged. Sorokin's centennial account on the changing proportion of social classes and sexes in relation to types of paintings, for example suggests a hypothesis on the influence of art publics on the content of paintings. More specifically, a sociologist would like to know what social conditions are associated with the acceptance of a particular kind of picture (cf. Adler, 1965:560).

To avoid this type of confusion, knowledge of the explanatory parameters of the sociologies of creative behavior are necessary. This paper presents an initial step in this direction by reporting on an outlined paradigm in the Sociology of Art. To extract and clarify an explicit sociological paradigm with reference to the sociology of art, Merton's (1968:460-1) schema, as demonstrated in his paradigm of the sociology of knowledge, is recognized as a valuable tool to this end. Merton's paradigmatic approach facilitates a codification of extant concepts, exposes hidden assumptions, and aids in the recognition of theoretical and ideological implications that are associated with the various theoretical positions promulgated in the sociologies of creative behavior (cf. Merton, 1968:55).

An examination of the above mentioned paradigm in the sociology of art may be of assistance in clarifying the paradigmatic confusion which characterizes the various sociologies of creature behavior. That is, this author contends, once sociologists of creative behavior recognize and limit themselves to specific empirical sociological facts, we should witness a rapid acceleration of findings and increased power of explanations accounting for the various facets of creative behavior. Until research contributions assume a consistency, we shall remain a loose knit collection of scholars building individual careers and undermining disciplinary advancement. The following, then, presents an outlined paradigm of the sociology of art for the purpose of critical inspection.[1]

Toward a Paradigm in The Sociology of Art

1. What is art?
   Imitation, imagination, communication: expression, emotion, language: (descriptive, command, mood), beauty, play.

2. What makes art, art?
   Class interests, prevailing taste, emotional experience (positive or negative), relation to nature, conception of nature, socially conditioned view, aesthetic experience,

transmission of emotion, communication, dominant institutions, dominant values, norms, social approval.

3. What is the existential basis of art?
   Relations of production, class, technical, alternatives, organism and environment, structure, institutions, approval, adjustment, mobility, excess production, conceptions of nature, ideological superstructure, "moral temperature," prevailing taste, emotional experience, style, thought images, visual images, values.

4. How does art relate to the existential base?
   a. Functionally: Class interests, production, relations between organism and environment, socially conditioned view, status enhancements.

   b. Symbolically: Unifying forces, represents nature, represents dominant institution, values, harmony, "moral temperature," taste, style, impulse, expression, communication, conceptions of nature, aesthetic character, emotional transmission, complexity.

5. Where is the sociological focus?
   Ideological superstructure, utilitarian concern, products, stylistc conceptions, stylistic typologies, complexity, technique, public's support, social roles, status, degrees of abstraction, tastes, structure.

6. What makes art change?
   Relations of production, "moment," excess energy, aesthetic impulse, successive conceptions of nature, evolution from simple to complex, accumulating struggle between technical skill and representation of nature, evolution in style, class struggle, cyclical development, alternating sensibility to values, class mobility.

7. What is the function of art?
   Express class interests, channel excess emotion (energy, catharsis), represent nature, communicate emotions, propagandize, intensify emotions, imitate nature, understand civilization, unify sympathy, preserve institutions, tranquilize, consume leisure time.

An inspection of the foregoing paradigm seems to confirm the confusion that was earlier hypothesized characterizing the sociology of art. Perhaps most noticeable in this confusion is the utilization of psychological concepts by sociologists. For example, in answering the question: What makes art, art? One finds "emotional experiences," "conception of nature," and "aesthetic experiences." These may or may not carry explanatory value, but in any case, they are the province of the psychologist. The other questions reveal similar inconsistencies.

To provide for a specific sociological approach, this type of confusion must be ferreted out of the literature. An examination of some recent contributions by sociologists of art may further indicate what is, and what is not necessary to a sociological account of art.

Vytautas Kavolis (1968:5-6) states: ". . . That the main sociological function of artistic style is the shaping or emotional re-enforcement of general tendencies to perceive situations of action in certain structured ways, (and) . . . that artistic content has the function of helping man

to develop an emotional envolvement, (but then) . . . a change in the composition of the art public, in the operations of the art market, or in the amount of artistic consumption by political or religious institutions can be expected to produce modifications in art style. . . ."

Kavolis has sufficiently confused the sociological and psychological perspectives. The reader of these passages may interpret "style" as a determinant of "emotional re-enforcement," or he may consider "style" as an "objectified" equivalent of "emotional re-enforcement." In any case, there can be little doubt that "emotional re-enforcement," "perception," and most probably "style" are the domain of the psychologist.[2] If "content has the function of helping man to develop an emotional involvement," then it too may be best accounted for by a psychologist. However, if "a change in the composition of the art public, [etc.] produces modifications in art style," then we shall admit the presence of a sociological explanation.

Hugh Dalziel Duncan subsumes his sociology of art under a sociological model of communication. The development of this model follows the perspective of Kenneth Burke. Describing Burke's "Dramatism" Duncan (1962:114) states: ". . . He [Burke] argues that if we regard man as symbol-using animal we must stress symbolism as a motive in any discussion of social behavior. That is, the kind of symbols we have, who can use them, where, how, and why -- these do not 'reflect' motives, they are motives."

This is a clear psychology and requires no further comment. However, in an article concerned explicitly with the sociology of art, Duncan (1957:497) maintains that art offers "mankind ways of reducing status tensions to manageable proportions." Here, we are again confronted with a split perspective, "status" is an acknowledged sociological concept; while "tensions" would be most generally accounted for in psychological terms. When the two are employed in conjunction, a variety of interpretations become possible. One might interpret "status tensions" to mean the difference between normative statuses and performance statuses; or, "status tensions" might mean divergent performance statuses between different social positions; or again, "status tensions" might mean that personality conflicts are reduced through an identification with normative statuses as represented in various art types; or perhaps "status tensions" is referring to art as a kind of therapy. Whatever Duncan's intended meaning, it is clear that the syndactyl application of concepts from different paradigms provides the reader with an "opportunity" to become mislead or confused.

The argument for a precise and separate application of the sociological paradigm and the psychological paradigm is not meant to negate the validity of a social psychological paradigm. Lindesmith and Strauss (1968:3) indicate the point of distinction: "Social psychology . . . is concerned with the behavior and psychological processes of individuals who occupy positions in social structures, organizations, and groups." Thus, a paradigm for a social psychology of creative behavior would attempt to compile a list of the questions and answers necessary to explain the reciprocal influences between creative behavior and "psychological processes" as these are related to "social structures, organizations, and groups." Given this delimination and perspective, it now appears in retrospect that Duncan's "sociology of art" is most likely a social psychology of art. However, it still remains for Duncan to specify which interpretation he had in mind. If Duncan identified a specific interpretation, then testable hypotheses could be designed with the extent and validity of his statement (1957:497) subsequently being confirmed.

Due to an overlap in the topical domains and terminology, the paradigmatic distinctions between sociology and social psychology seem to be the most difficult for sociologists and social psychologists to recognize. Part of the difficulty may be connected with a hesitation of sociologists of creative behavior to recognize the validity of an explanation that accounts for something less than the "complete" phenomena. Also, this confusion seems to be related to the emphasis on creative behavior productions, as opposed to their publics.

Robert N. Wilson (1964:vi-vii) exemplifies both of these difficulties by placing "an emphasis on close study of the creator and the art product . . . and by claiming that to 'understand' a work of art in the fullest sense requires intimate acquaintance with the created work itself, with the personality of its creator, with the social milieu which is an environing frame for artist, art, and audience."

The argument here does not exclude any of these aspects as being irrelevant, it only asserts that the acquisition of social facts representing these various aspects cannot proceed in such a hodgepodge fashion. In general, it can be seen that the emphasis on the "creator and the art product" suggest one type of perspective in terms of social behavior as it influences and is influenced by internal events (social psychology); while, the "environing frame for artist, art, and audience" suggests a concern for social behavior as it influences and in influenced by external events (sociology). Assembling concepts simultaneously from these two different emphases has been shown to promote confusion.

Further, as Adler (1965:559) notes ". . . it is important (sociologically) to realize that the leader successful artist becomes a leader not so much due to anything identifiable in his own personality, but rather due to the fact that followers gather about him. It is the followers who produce the leader, not the leader who produces the followers." Wilson, in his study on "The American Poet in American Society" demonstrates (a) his failure to grasp the significance of the public dimension, and (b) the resulting confusion from his multi-paradigmatic approach. Wilson (1964:4) states that: "It is impossible to understand the poet's relation to the social milieu without taking into account his relation to himself and to the expressive medium . . . (and) unless this private world is recognized as the locus of the artistic role, we shall seriously misjudge his intentions and importance."

First, a clear recognition of the public dimension would exclude the poet's "intentions" as being irrelevant. Whatever the poet intends to do, these "intentions" may or may not be represented in the fruits of his effort. Second, the poet's importance in terms of the "social milieu" is most certainly not based upon his relation to himself.

One final consideration in the problematics associated with the sociological and social psychological paradigms is in their similar point of departure. That is, both may observe the same behavioral set and offer equally sensible explanations. The point is not to posit primacy of one over the other, but only to note that at this rudimentary stage of development in the sociologies of creative behavior, care must be exercised in precise communication. This might be accomplished through a familiarization with the paradigmatic distinctions between the various approaches contributing in these areas.

If explanations for particular sets of behavior remain inclusive of one paradigm at a time, the probability of achieving observational consensus and interpretational precision is greatly

enhanced. The importance of the paradigm in communication is not that it delimits fact from non-fact, but that the relationship between facts are thought of in a particular way.

An example of how the same phenomenon may be seen differently can be illustrated with the White and White (1965) study on the institutional organization of nineteenth century French painters. The White's devote considerable space to the growth and centralization of the Academic system, which ironically indicates the successful achievement of its aims to the detriment of the painters and the eventual demise of the Academic system itself. The Royal Academy was successful in professionalizing painting and in recruiting painters as exemplified by the international centralization of training in Paris. There were various attempts to decentralize by establishing local academies (White and White, 1965:7), but the Royal Academy at Paris reigned supreme. The White's (1965:8) call this a "psychological ascendancy." They are viewing the institutional changes of that time from a social psychological perspective. However, a sociological explanation for this same sequence of events (institutional changes) would be to say that the Academy at Paris had achieved a monopoly on defining what was and what was not art.

Having shown a different interpretation for the same phenomenon does not mean that a change in scientific perspectives is in progress. Rather, it has shown that there are two compatible but different kinds of interest in the same topical domain. The White's were piecing the institutional facts together in such a way as to facilitate explanation of the relationships between ". . . psychological processes of individuals who occupy positions in social structures. . ." (Lindesmith and Strauss, 1968:3). The second interpretation stressed a greater concern for external relationships.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the interests and kinds of predictions that a scientist is interested in, determine the way he in going to look at his data. What has been suggested here is that the scientists of creative behavior must begin to explicate with greater precision the way in which they are looking at their data. In this way, the confusion that arises from a multi-paradigmatic approach toward a single phenomenon will be lessened, and we can get on to the business of discovering where the "real" inconsistencies lie in our phychological, social psychological, and sociological theories. Developments of this type should either strengthen our explanations and predictions or, at least, serve to disentangle some of the confusing explanations plaguing the literature. Both of these aspects imply success for the sciences of creative behavior.

Footnotes

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[1]This outline is an epitome of an earlier unpublished manuscript, "Toward a paradigm in the sociology of art," in which twenty theorists of art were surveyed and presented in a propositional format.

[2]The question of whether or not "style" is a legitimate concept for the sociologist focuses upon the difficulty of defining "style" in such a way as to ensure that the configurations one has in mind will be identified in the same way by everyone in the population. To my knowledge, no such definition of art "style" has yet been designed; that is, a definition meeting the criterion of mutually exclusive categories.

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